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Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TO AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU IMMEDIATE

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MASERU FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, BC

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: STATE I8330

I. FINAL VERSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT HAS BEEN
APPROVED. PLEASE PASS TO GOB AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
UNLESS YOU PERCEIVE OBJECTION. TEXT FOLLOWS. QUOTE:

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THE GOVERNMENT OF BOTSWANA HAS DEMONSTRATED GENUINE
CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOR POLITICAL AND CIVIL
LIBERTIES. THE CONSTITUTION WHICH IT INHERITED ON ITS
INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT BRITAIN IN I966 PROVIDES
SPECIFIC GUARANTEES FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE SECURITY
OF THE PERSON. THESE HAVE BEEN RESPECTED IN PRACTICE,
AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO MAINTAINING

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THEM IN THE FACE OF RISING REGIONAL TURBULENCE AND TENSION. BOTSWANA MAINTAINS A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING FREE ELECTIONS AND A MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENT, AND TOLERATES PUBLIC CRITICISM OF ITS POLICIES. PRESIDENT KHAMA'S PERSONAL DEDICATION TO HUMAN RIGHTS HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF BOTSWANA'S GOOD RECORD, BUT A STRONG EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE THESE ATTITUDES THROUGHOUT THE

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY.

RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

THERE HAVE BEEN NO ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE IN BOTSWANA.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

THERE ARE EFFECTIVE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS IN BOTSWANA AGAINST CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT OF ANY KIND.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

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THERE ARE EFFECTIVE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS IN BOTSWANA AGAINST ARBITRARY ARREST, DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT. THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

PERSONS CHARGED WITH A CRIMINAL OFFENSE ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY IN A FAIR AND PUBLIC TRIAL WITH LEGAL COUNSEL.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

THERE ARE EFFECTIVE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ARBITRARY INVASION OF THE HOME.

GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO FULFILLING THE BASIC FOOD AND SHELTER NEEDS OF ITS POOR. IN I977 IT REVALUED ITS CURRENCY, DESPITE THE

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ADVERSE EFFECT ON EXPORTS, SPECIFICALLY IN ORDER TO PLACE INCREASED FOOD PURCHASING POWER IN THE HANDS OF THE POOR, WHO IN BOTSWANA CONSTITUTE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION AND ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON FOOD IMPORTED FROM SOUTH AFRICA. BOTSWANA POLICIES DESIGNED TO FULFILL BASIC NEEDS OF THE POPULATION INCLUDE EMPHASIS ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE RURAL POOR AND ON EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, INCLUDING VOCATIONAL TRAINING.

CORRUPTION IS NOT A PROBLEM IN BOTSWANA. THE SMALL SCALE OF SOCIETY AND THE FREE (ALBEIT GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND RATHER INEXPERIENCED) PRESS MILITATE AGAINST BOTH PETTY CORRUPTION AND THE DIVERSION OF SIGNIFICANT
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RESOURCES INTO THE HANDS OF A SMALL ELITE.

3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

BOTSWANA GUARANTEES IN PRINCIPLE AND PERMITS IN PRACTICE FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY. THIS FREEDOM EXTENDS TO CRITICS AND POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE COUNTRY'S ONLY DAILY NEWSPAPER IS GOVERNMENT-OWNED BUT INDEPENDENTLY EDITED AND FREE OF CENSORSHIP. PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF MEDIA IS NOT PROHIBITED, BUT HAS NOT SO FAR PROVED ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

FREEDOM OF TRAVEL WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD AND THE FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE ARE ALSO RESPECTED. BOTSWANA IMPOSES NO SPECIAL RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGNERS WISHING TO ENTER BUT MAY BE FORCED TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE IF HER BORDERS CONTINUE TO BE VIOLATED BY FOREIGN GUERRILLAS AND RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

BOTSWANA IS A MULTI-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY WHICH ALLOWS OPEN CAMPAIGN CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT AND FREE, SECRET-BALLOT ELECTIONS BASED ON
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UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE. BOTSWANA'S SMALL WHITE MINORITY PARTICIPATES FREELY IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND IS REPRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT AND THE CABINET. REGISTRATION, VOTING AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF POLICY PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE PRESIDENT.

4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

BOTSWANA WELCOMES OUTSIDE ATTENTION TO AND INVESTIGATION OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BELIEVES THE MOST SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IN BOTSWANA INVOLVES NOT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS BUT THE STATUS OF THE SEVERAL THOUSAND POLITICAL REFUGEES FROM NEIGHBORING STATES. IT URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE GIVING THEM ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND POLITICAL SHELTER AGAINST ANY FORCED REPATRIATION. BOTSWANA HAS EXTENDED POLITICAL ASYLUM TO REFUGEES IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION OR RACE, BUT ITS ABILITY TO ASSIST THEM ECONOMICALLY IS LIMITED. IN 1977 THE U.S. DONATED $6 MILLION TO HELP EASE THE FINANCIAL BURDEN PLACED ON BOTSWANA BY THE REFUGEES. VANCE

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TAGS: SHUM, BC
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